

Kindle Hill Foundation



Founded in 2019 by Saly Glassman and based in Blue Bell, PA, Kindle Hill Foundation (www.kindlehill.org) is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to **Equine Assisted programs that are focused on learning, training, and therapy**. Although the foundation serves a diverse population of clients, its primary focus is training and treatment for the first responder community, namely, law enforcement.

Kindle Hill chose to emphasize law enforcement because it was clear that this professional community was unlikely to ask for help, and yet, clearly needs the support. Furthermore, first responders have been challenged by public misunderstanding and misperceptions over recent years. This has been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and an increase in crime and violence nationwide.

Kindle Hill Foundation's first responder Equine Assisted Training is completely unique in that it offers a graduated curriculum, designed with input from first responders, and backed by our team's research and education. To our knowledge, no other equine assisted program exists that integrates principles from Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) and Integrating Communications Assessments and Tactics (ICAT) as well as mental health protocols taught and supported by Kevin Gilmartin, PhD.

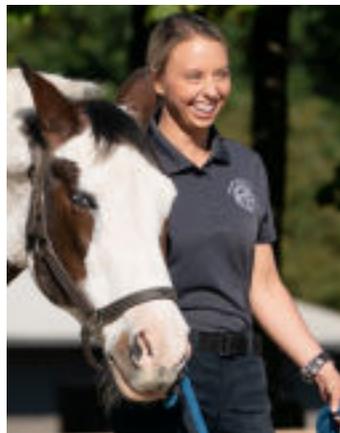
All the Kindle Hill equine assisted programs are non-riding, and no prior horse experience is necessary. When participants engage with horses on the ground, they experience an open relationship, which facilitates a two-way partnership.

The Kindle Hill Foundation's team consists of Saly Glassman, (President and Director,) our board of directors, a licensed professional counselor/therapist, an equine specialist, and 5-10 community volunteers, including two who are studying for their master's degrees in counseling. Over the past two years, Kindle Hill Foundation has provided services to over 300 first responders in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including law enforcement leadership, police departments, dispatchers, firefighters, SWAT teams, Negotiator teams, and supporting mental health professionals, such as hospitals and trauma counselors.

Saly and her core team members, all experienced equestrians, have participated in ABLE/ICAT law enforcement training, and this content has been integrated into programs for first responders.

The Kindle Hill foundation mission for first responders is to is serve the community in two significant ways through its equine assisted programs:

- (1) Advancement of training in de-escalation, negotiation, and partnership
- (2) Support of officer wellness to relieve stress, and recover from anxiety, depression, and PTSD.



A Unique and Innovative Approach

Why Horses?

Horses and first responders are similar in how they view the world. They both understand that to survive they must:

- Exist in a perpetual hypervigilant state
- Maintain a heightened level of awareness

There are many benefits to working with horses for learning, therapy, and/or training. Here are a few examples that apply in particular to the law enforcement community:

- Horses do not hold judgment or bias against other beings
- Horses have no agenda; they cannot premeditate their actions
- Horses give first responders the opportunity to practice new techniques without fear of judgment or negative consequences
- Horses provide immediate feedback to first responders

- Horses offer first responders a truly unique experience, and the opportunity to actively train outside of the office environment. Officers spend a great deal of training time in a room, with PowerPoint presentations and lectures, but this is not how they live their jobs! Their work is physical, and requires a combination of strength, composure, tact, and non-verbal communication, to engender both trust and compliance.



What makes Kindle Hill's programs unique compared to others?

Although there are other “therapeutic” riding facilities around the U.S., as well as equine assisted therapy and learning programs, most of these are focused on special needs children and adults, and veterans. There are some programs that are available to law enforcement personnel, but these are not custom designed for that population. Furthermore, the program leaders often come from psychology, social work, and educational backgrounds, and they lack training in law enforcement culture. Lastly, there are no other curriculums in existence that combine law enforcement (often mandated) training with equine assisted learning and therapy, specific to advancing agency goals. At Kindle Hill, we collaborate directly with agency leadership to focus on their specific priorities, and we adjust our curriculum to suit their needs and goals.

The Kindle Hill foundation programs are designed to support first responder wellness in three general areas: communication (learning), mental health (therapy) and professional and personal self-care (training).

Equine Assisted Learning

Kindle Hill Foundation's proprietary Equine Assisted Learning program is a personal growth and development series of 10-12 sessions. Costs are covered by the foundation endowment, grants, and donations from the public.

Sessions are held between an individual first responder, (often referred by agency leadership) and a Master's in Counseling candidate or principal. The session may include one or more horses.

This HIPAA compliant program is focused on individuals who may benefit from support to sharpen or advance self and interpersonal skills such as:

- Nonverbal communication
- Empathy
- Self-care
- Improving personal and professional relationships
- Self confidence
- Dealing with difficult people
- Negotiation and partnering
- Scripting (overcoming objections in public perceptions)

Equine Assisted Therapy

Kindle Hill Foundation's Equine Assisted Therapy program is designed to be complementary to talk therapy and medication, as well as alternative methods, such as EMDR.

The program is a series of 10-12 private sessions with an EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) certified and licensed therapist.

The therapist works with a first responder (referred by agency leadership or mental health resources in the agency territory) who experienced a traumatic event or cumulative stress, and may be challenged by PTSD, anxiety, and depression. The session includes one or more horses.

- 10-12 sessions are paid by the foundation's endowment, grants, and donations from the public
- One-hour sessions by appointment only
- Sessions are self-scheduled between the first responder and therapist
- HIPAA compliant
- When advised by agency leadership, the therapist integrates critical incident stress debriefing
- Family members may participate in sessions

Equine Assisted Training

Kindle Hill Foundation's proprietary Equine Assisted Training program was originally developed by Saly Glassman and Kenneth Lawson, Chief of Whitpain, PA Police Department, and enhanced with the help of first responders all over the region. The curriculum is based on the principles of natural horsemanship and is aligned with ICAT and ABLE in support of regional and state mandates.

The program has evolved since its creation in the summer of 2020. Community law enforcement has been integral to the development of curriculums, advising on relevancy and creating scenarios that are as close to "real world" as possible.

The curriculum focuses on two main critical goals:

- **The development of advanced skills in de-escalation, negotiation, and partnering**

Example: We know from research (ICAT) that slowing down events and increasing space and time can potentially lower the risk of harmful outcomes and avoid or mitigate physical danger and emotional consequences. The law enforcement duty belt is full of equipment applicable to the use of force. However, officers spend most of their time speaking with people! Where are their tools to help them in this critical engagement? In many respects, the first responder is a salesman...of alternatives! (Randolph D Hicks II PhD.) This is the essence of the art of persuasion, and it can be taught, particularly with horses. After all, you can't make a 1300-pound animal do something it does not want to do, but you can convince it, with verbal and non-verbal communication skills, refined with repetition. Horses are forgiving and accepting, and they tolerate this well. Kindle Hill Foundation's program trains officers to become more proficient "wordsmiths," as they also practice advanced nonverbal communication skills. They can promptly use these practical techniques in the field to protect themselves and others.

- **Techniques for managing stress, anxiety, PTSD, and other rigorous demands of the first responder culture.**

Example: The importance of breathing to oxygenate the brain and slow things down in preparation for high stress situations.

This can be taught and practiced when consequences are low. Research demonstrates (Dr. Melis Yilmaz Balban and Dr. David Blake) that when officers are in a "habitual mindset," (freeze, flight, fight) their performance deteriorates and they are more likely to make errors, both mechanical (missing a target) and cerebral (using poor judgment and making a subsequent and very serious mistake.) Both endanger the officer and everyone else, and they can be avoided, but only if other options are offered, instructed, and practiced repeatedly. We know from Dr. Kevin Gilmartin's research that these are biological reactions, and they are cumulative. Therefore, it's the biology that needs to be addressed head on.

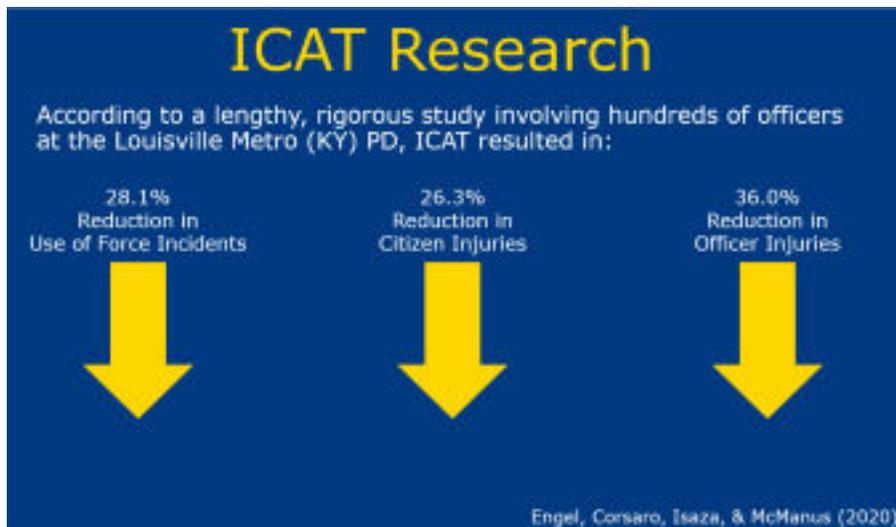
The Equine Assisted Training program has two curriculum options:

- The standard series, which is composed of four 90-minute sessions
- An accelerated version which can be shortened to one, two or three sessions, depending on travel time, availability, and shift cycles.

Sessions are held with a maximum of six first responders. Participants receive a certification of completion after attending all sessions and completing an evaluation of their experience.

Evidence of Success

The Equine Assisted first responder training program is designed to support the principles of ICAT and ABLE. Researchers have already shown positive results of the impacts of ICAT. The following data was presented during the ICAT training attended by the Kindle Hill team.



ICAT Research (II)

Study results indicate that ICAT led to changes in officer behavior associated with and surrounding the use of force (e.g. injuries to officers and suspects). According to Dr. Robin Engel, this is the first study of a police de-escalation program to show changes in both officer attitudes and behavior.

Engel, Corsaro, Isaza, & McManus (2020)

ICAT Research (III)

"The research team is confident that the changes in uses of force – and the subsequent reductions in citizen and officer injuries – corresponded with the timing of the [ICAT] training across the various police divisions."

Engel, Corsaro, Isaza, & McManus (2020)

Metrics

Kindle Hill Foundation has established agency guided metrics to measure program efficacy. Since the program is less than 18 months old, data on a large scale has yet to be obtained. However, Kindle Hill has received considerable constructive feedback from surveys issued to every group at the conclusion of their Training series. Those comments are included below in quotations.

- Improved self-care for managing stress and PTSD in the first responder community.
- Reduction in mental health breakdowns, violence, and suicides of first responders.
- Use of more advanced techniques in de-escalation, negotiation, and partnering, as alternatives to leading with use of force.
- Increase in community support for first responders and an appreciation for their well-being.
- Fostering sympathetic and understanding relationships between first responders and the community members they serve.

First Responder Feedback from Equine Assisted Training Program:

"When we did the 'contact-cover' exercise with a horse, everything clicked. Slowing things down showed me that the horse and I could stay calm, and I was still in control."

—Police Captain

"I had been feeling very stressed in my job, and at home. It seems that everyone wants a piece of me. Being with the horses gave me a sense of peace and cleared my head."

— Patrolman

"The horses taught me to see through a different set of eyes and point of view. When I'm with the horses, all of my stress seems to fade away."

— Police Sergeant

“I never thought about how much stress I was accumulating. I just kept powering on and pushing it all down. The horses saw right through that, and I realized I wasn’t hiding it as well as I thought. It was a huge relief to realize that asking for help was actually an act of courage, and by getting help, I could get stronger and healthier, and be there for others.”

—Detective and Military officer

“At first I thought this was going to be another one of those lectures on ‘taking my use of force away.’ I was shocked when I saw how supportive the training team was, and how being around the horses calmed me down. I realized I was building a better toolbox, and while force was still available, it wasn’t always the best choice. Learning to slow down gave me the benefit of time and space.”

—Police Corporal

Program Challenges

Kindle Hill Foundation has been successful in its program implementation despite facing challenges on the macro and micro level. Kindle Hill’s endowment, funded by Saly Glassman’s personal resources, is supplemented by grants and donations from the public. Significantly more funding is needed to size and scale equine assisted therapy and learning programs for first responders, and this could be provided in partnership with municipalities, federal agencies, and industry insurers.

On the macro level, there remains a very real need for mental health treatment and support for first responders. However, the first responder culture has not yet overcome its stigma, even where agencies proactively offer it, and individuals are comfortable asking for it.

This resistance to outwardly supporting mental health trickles down to challenges in obtaining financial support to offer programs focused on “mental wellness”. Seeking funding from agencies and municipalities for “training” programs is also difficult because these programs are relatively new, unorthodox, and unique.

On a micro level, reduced staffing within local townships due to sickness and resignations has left agencies shorthanded, leading to scheduling and administrative challenges.

Possibilities for Program Replication

Kindle Hill Foundation believes that its programs could be replicated if conditions were met in terms of proper training, facility, and resources. The curriculum has a la carte components that can be interchanged, depending on agency priorities. There are many equine assisted therapy and learning programs already in operation nationally, but most of these are focused on the veteran population, and they do not integrate “training” into their curricula. Kindle Hill Foundation has invested time and resources to assimilate into the first responder culture and develop a strong local network with agencies. This has led to increased credibility and acceptance of the unique benefits of equine assisted therapy and learning. By employing a collaborative approach, proper training and guidance, the Kindle Hill proprietary programs could be sized and scaled to accommodate offerings on a national level.

Additional Materials

In addition to this application, Kindle Hill Foundation has submitted supplemental information within a PowerPoint presentation.

The foundation website is www.kindlehill.org

Media and press on the foundation can be found here, <https://www.kindlehill.org/media>



Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to share our mission and programs with the Destination Zero Award Program of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. We recognize that the Officer Wellness category encompasses a wide range of topics and services, and there will likely be strong competition for consideration. That's good, because it means that professionals are taking this seriously and acknowledging the urgency for constructive change. We are proud to be in the company of other organizations that have implemented innovative measures and demonstrated positive, meaningful results in officer wellness. At Kindle Hill Foundation, we are committed to giving back to those who have so selflessly served us. We know that by helping them, they can continue to help us maintain our quality of life which we hold so dear.

Thank you for your consideration,

Saly A. Glassman
Kindle Hill Foundation